



CHAPTER II:
Population and Housing



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INTRODUCTION

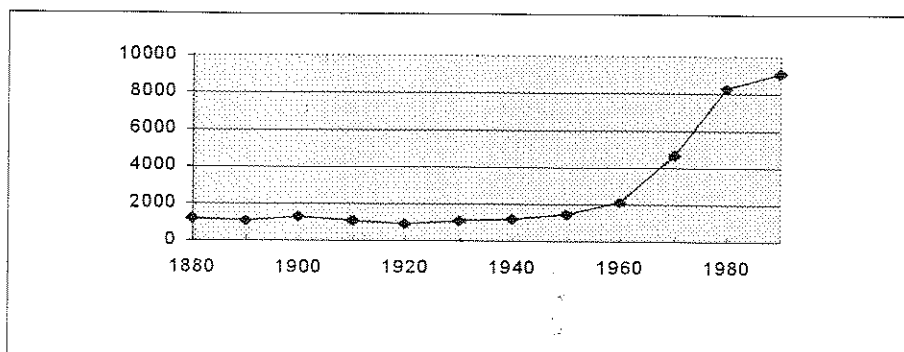
This chapter examines population and housing trends in the Town of Amherst, including a discussion of historical and future growth. These trends provide a basis for the analysis and recommendations of this report. The information in this chapter is based on the decennial US Census in conjunction with local and state reports. While the 1990 census for population may be somewhat dated at this time, its information is the most comprehensive and standardized data available. Wherever possible, the most recent data from local sources have been employed.

POPULATION

Historical Trend

Amherst has witnessed periods of growth and decline during the last century as Figure II-1 and Table II-1 illustrate. Based on 1996 population estimates provided by the New Hampshire Office of State Planning (OSP), the Town's current population is 9,663. The largest numerical increase in population occurred between 1970 and 1980, with the addition of more than 3,600 persons. The sudden expansion during this time stems from two broad trends which continue today, the growth of Nashua as a high-technology center, and exurban settlement from the suburbs of Boston following improvements in the quality of the state and federal highway system. Over the last decade, growth has continued but at a much lesser rate, decreasing from 124 percent between 1970-80 to 10.0 percent between 1980-90. According to OSP estimates, approximately 595 persons have been added since 1990.

FIGURE II-1
HISTORIC POPULATION GROWTH 1880-1990



Source: US Census.

TABLE II-1
POPULATION CHANGE

Year	Population	% Change	Numerical Change	Avg. Annual % Change
1880	1,225	NA	NA	NA
1890	1,053	14.0	-172	1.5
1900	1,231	16.9	178	1.6
1910	1,060	13.9	-171	1.5
1920	868	18.1	-192	2.0
1930	1,115	28.5	247	2.5
1940	1,174	5.3	59	0.5
1950	1,461	24.5	287	2.2
1960	2,051	40.4	590	3.5
1970	4,605	124.5	2,554	8.4
1980	8,243	79.0	3,638	6.0
1990	9,068	10.0	825	1.4
1996*	9,663	6.6	595	1.1

Source: US Census.

*1997 OSP Population Projection.

Local Census

In addition to the US Census, Amherst maintains a local population database. The most recent figures are compared to the US Census and the OSP estimate for 1996 in Table II-2. The Amherst census relies on notice of residency (certificates of occupancy or a piece of mail with a local address) from new citizens to measure population and also on self-notification of residents who are moving out of town. In cases where new residents have moved into housing, the former occupants will be contacted to verify that they've either moved out or relocated within Amherst. In addition, death certificates are entered into the local database as they are received. A quick look at the census over time illustrates a similar rate of growth during the nineties, although it suggests that the Town grew faster during the seventies and eighties than the federal figures demonstrate. According to the Town, the actual number of residents in 1996 was 1,427 persons greater than the Census estimate.

TABLE II-2
COMPARISON OF LOCAL AND US CENSUS DATA

Year	Town Estimate	US Census	OSP Pop. Estimate	% Change (Town)	Difference (US - Town)
1960	2,051	2,051	NA		0
1970	4,893	4,605	NA	138.6	-288
1980	9,476	8,243	NA	93.7	-1,233
1990	10,441	9,068	NA	10.2	-1,373
1996	11,090	NA	9,663	6.2	-1,427

Source: Town of Amherst Population Census, US Census.

Similar growth trends have affected all of the communities in the Nashua Regional Planning Commission (NRPC) region. The context of regional change is presented in Table II-3. Since 1950, Amherst has gained an increasing share of the regional population; as have the surrounding communities of Hollis, Litchfield, and Merrimack, while Nashua has seen a proportional decline.

TABLE II-3
LOCAL AND REGIONAL POPULATION SHARES 1960-1990

Municipality	1950	1960	1970	1980	1990
Amherst	2.8	3.2	4.6	6.0	5.3
Brookline	1.3	1.2	1.2	1.3	1.4
Hollis	2.3	2.7	2.6	3.4	3.3
Hudson	7.9	9.2	10.6	10.2	11.4
Litchfield	0.8	1.1	1.4	3.0	3.2
Lyndeborough	1.0	0.9	0.8	0.8	0.7
Merrimack	3.6	4.7	8.5	11.2	12.9
Milford	7.9	7.6	6.6	6.3	6.9
Mont Vernon	0.8	0.9	0.9	1.1	1.1
Nashua	65.5	61.2	55.3	49.2	46.5
Pelham	2.5	4.1	5.4	5.9	5.5
Wilton	3.7	3.2	2.3	1.9	1.8
NRPC Region	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0

Source: *Profile of the Nashua Region*, NRPC 1994.

Population Density

Population densities (population/land area) of the NRPC region are presented in Table II-4. While Amherst comprises about 11 percent of the land area of the region, it contained about 5 percent of the 1990 population. Amherst's density was 263 persons/square mile in 1990, up slightly from the 1980 density of 239. The density ranking compares Amherst to the other communities; for both years Amherst maintained the same ranking.

TABLE II-4
POPULATION DENSITY 1980 AND 1990
NRPC REGION

<i>Municipality</i>	<i>Area</i>	<i>1980</i>			<i>1990</i>		
	<i>Sq. Mi.</i>	<i>Pop.</i>	<i>Pop. Density</i>	<i>Rank</i>	<i>Pop.</i>	<i>Pop. Density</i>	<i>Rank</i>
Amherst	34.5	8,243	239	7	9,068	263	7
Brookline	20.1	1,766	88	10	2,410	120	9
Hollis	32.6	4,679	144	8	5,705	175	8
Hudson	29.2	14,022	480	2	19,530	669	3
Litchfield	15.1	4,150	275	6	5,516	365	5
Lyndeborough	30.6	1,070	35	12	1,294	42	12
Merrimack	33	15,406	467	3	22,156	671	2
Milford	25.9	8,685	335	4	11,795	455	4
Mont Vernon	16.8	1,444	86	11	1,812	108	11
Nashua	30.6	67,865	2,218	1	79,662	2,603	1
Pelham	26.7	8,090	303	5	9,408	352	6
Wilton	26.1	2,669	102	9	3,122	120	10
Region	321.2	138,089	430		17,1478	534	
State of NH	8,993	920,475	102		1,109,252	123	

Source: Profile of the Nashua Region, NRPC 1994.

Age Distribution

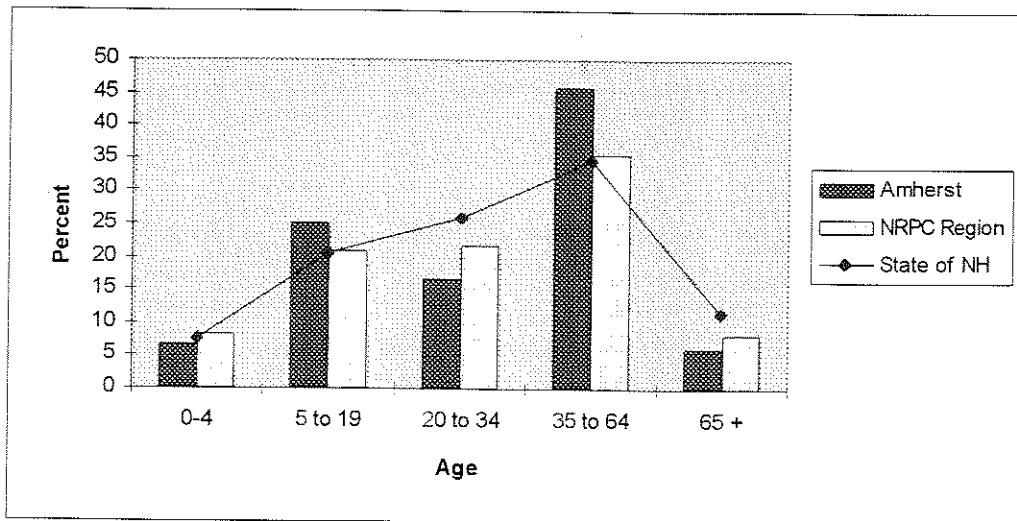
An understanding of the age distribution of the Town's population can reveal the needs of the community and help plan for the future. As of 1990, the percentage of Amherst's population aged 35-64, 35.6 percent, is greater than the same category for the region, county, or state, 35.6, 34.2, and 34.5 percent respectively (see Table II-5 and Figure II-2). Since 1970, the actual number of residents in this category increased from 1,400 to 4,150 in 1990. The percentage of school aged children 5-19 is greater than that for the region, 25.0 as compared to 20.8 percent. While the relative percentage of individuals in this category has declined since 1970 from 31.6 percent to 25.0 percent, the actual number has increased as illustrated in Table II-6. This category represents school age children and is critical when planning for schools and recreational activities. The elderly population, aged 65+ is the smallest cohort and has experienced slight growth since 1980. While the working age population has grown, it is clear that they are moving elsewhere to retire as the relative percentage of seniors has seen little change over time.

TABLE II-5
AGE DISTRIBUTIONS IN 1990
AMHERST, NRPC REGION, STATE OF NEW HAMPSHIRE

Age	Amherst Number	% Total	Region Number	% Total	State Number	% Total
0 - 4	608	6.7	14,087	8.2	84,631	7.6
5 - 9	729	8.0	12,698	7.4	80,429	7.3
10 -14	787	8.7	11,549	6.7	71,748	6.5
15 -19	755	8.3	11,466	6.7	76,448	6.9
20-24	436	4.8	11,827	6.9	82,102	7.4
25-34	1,063	11.7	34,657	20.2	205,815	18.6
35-44	1,814	20.0	29,766	17.4	183,649	16.6
45-54	1,543	17.0	18,920	11.0	111,387	10.0
55-59	436	4.8	6,635	3.9	43,851	4.0
60-64	364	4.0	5,732	3.3	44,208	4.0
65-74	357	3.9	8,415	4.9	71,837	6.5
75+	176	1.9	5,726	3.3	53,147	4.8
Total	9,068	100.0	171,478	100.0	1,109,252	100.0

Source: 1990 US Census.

FIGURE II-2
PERCENTAGE OF POPULATION IN SELECTED AGE GROUPS
TOWN OF AMHERST, NRPC REGION, STATE OF NEW HAMPSHIRE



Source: 1990 US Census.

TABLE II-6
POPULATION BY AGE GROUPS, 1970-90

Age	1970 Total	% of Total	1980 Total	% of Total	1990 Total	% of Total
0 to 4	501	10.9	557	6.8	608	6.7
5 to 19	1,454	31.6	2,729	33.1	2,271	25.0
20 to 34	966	21.0	1,521	18.5	1,499	16.5
35 to 64	1,400	30.4	3,047	37.0	4,157	45.8
65 +	284	6.2	389	4.7	533	5.9
Total	4,605	100	8,243	100	9,068	100

Source: US Census.

Natural Increase and Migration Shares of Growth

Population growth in a given community is driven by a combination of natural increase and migration. Natural increase is based on a comparison of births to deaths for a given year while migration is the net increase of those moving into an area in contrast to those moving out. The assumption made is that all growth not explained by natural increase is attributed to migration (see Table II-7). During the seventies, the period of highest growth, migration accounted for close to 85 percent of the population change. Beginning in the eighties, however, this trend dramatically reversed itself and natural growth now accounts for a larger percent of the population increase than migration. This change has been accompanied by a slackened rate of growth, as the Town grew by nearly 2,800 fewer persons during the eighties than it had during the seventies.

TABLE II-7
NATURAL INCREASE/MIGRATION

Year	Births	Deaths	Natural Increase	Pop Change	Growth by Migration	% Migration
1970-79	823	281	542	3,638	3,096	85
1980-89	913	347	566	825	179	22
1990-96	590	249	341	595	254	43

Source: Town Reports, NH Vital Statistics Reports.

Household Size

Table II-8 describes the breakdown of household size in the Town and the NRPC region. Amherst's population is comprised of approximately 50 percent fewer single person households and approximately one quarter more four person households than the NRPC region. This predominance of four person families is another reflection of the personality of Amherst as a bedroom community accommodating to smaller sized families and home buyers.

The more important overall trend is the general decline in household size witnessed between 1980-90. The average household size in 1990 was 3.0 according to the US Census.

**TABLE II-8
HOUSEHOLD SIZES**

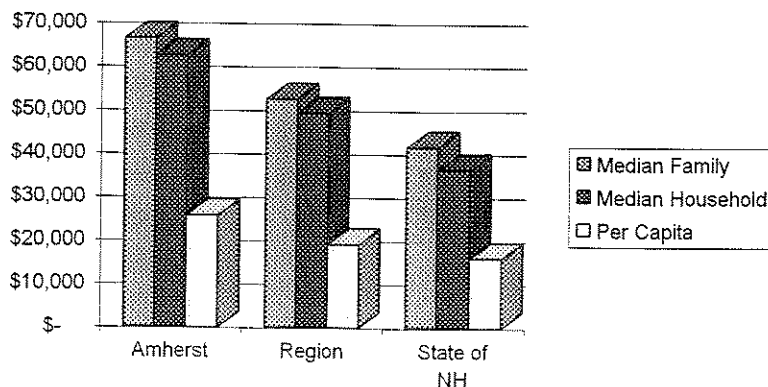
Household Size (Persons/Unit)	Amherst				NRPC Region			
	1980 Number	Percent	1990 Number	Percent	1980 Number	Percent	1990 Number	Percent
1	260	8.4	305	10.2	8,002	17.4	11,701	19.8
2	614	25.1	949	31.8	13,496	29.3	18,891	31.9
3	446	18.2	611	20.4	8,138	17.7	11,368	19.2
4	671	27.4	734	24.6	8,915	19.4	11,080	18.7
5	328	13.4	287	9.6	4,650	10.1	4,361	7.4
6+	181	7.4	102	3.4	2,832	6.2	1,752	3.0
Total		100		100		100		100

Source: US Census.

Household Income

Household incomes for Amherst are predominantly at the higher end of the spectrum, with the highest number of households earning between \$50,000 to \$74,999, and nearly 65 percent earning greater than \$50,000 yearly (see Figure II-3 and Table II-9). On a regional level, approximately 35 percent of the population has similar earnings. Median family income for Amherst in 1989 (defined as the median figure for total money received in the calendar year by all members 15 years of age and older) was equal to \$64,441, marking a 104 percent increase since 1979, as depicted in Table II-10.

**FIGURE II-3
COMPARATIVE INCOME MEASURES
AMHERST, NH, NRPC REGION, AND STATE OF NH**



Source: 1990 US Census.

TABLE II-9
HOUSEHOLD INCOME BY CATEGORY
AMHERST, HILLSBOROUGH COUNTY, NRPC REGION, STATE OF NEW HAMPSHIRE

Income	Amherst		Region		County		State	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
>5,000	23	0.8	1,586	2.6	3,962	3.2	13,747	3.3
5,000 - 9,999	58	1.9	2,756	4.5	7,570	6.1	27,508	6.7
10,000 - 14,999	39	1.3	2,446	4.0	6,375	5.1	27,574	6.7
15,000 - 24,999	151	5.1	6,851	11.3	15,943	12.8	61,818	15.0
25,000 - 34,999	246	8.2	7,648	12.6	17,547	14.1	65,472	15.9
35,000 - 49,999	531	17.8	14,134	23.3	28,210	22.6	89,834	21.8
50,000 - 74,999	781	26.1	14,372	23.7	27,845	22.3	81,270	19.8
75,000 - 99,999	498	16.7	6,531	10.8	10,261	8.2	25,773	6.3
100,000 +	660	22.1	4,291	7.1	6,979	5.6	18,391	4.5
Total		100.0		100.0		100.0		100.0

Source: 1990 US Census.

TABLE II-10
MEDIAN HOUSEHOLD INCOME GROWTH
NRPC REGION, 1979-89

	1979	1989	% Change
Amherst	\$30,575	\$62,568	104.6
Brookline	\$22,545	\$55,858	147.8
Hollis	\$25,463	\$64,351	152.7
Hudson	\$22,511	\$47,859	112.6
Litchfield	\$22,785	\$49,946	119.2
Lyndeborough	\$19,906	\$42,208	112.0
Merrimack	\$24,756	\$52,798	113.3
Milford	\$17,368	\$38,792	123.4
Mont Vernon	\$21,607	\$49,650	129.8
Nashua	\$19,285	\$40,505	110.0
Pelham	\$22,875	\$50,187	119.4
Wilton	\$15,793	\$36,098	128.6
NRPC Region	\$22,122	\$49,235	122.6
State of NH	\$17,013	\$36,329	113.5

Source: US Census.

Employment

As of June 1997, Amherst's labor force totaled 5,300 persons, with an unemployment rate of 2.4 percent. A ten year history of employment for Amherst is presented in Table II-11. Historically, the percentage of unemployment has been lower than the regional, state, and national levels. In recent history, the highest unemployment rate, 5.1 percent, occurred in 1991 (see Table II-11). As of June 1997, in a period of a strong national economy, unemployment fell to 2.4 percent in Amherst, compared to 5.2 percent nation-wide, representing the best levels in a decade.

TABLE II-11
LABOR MARKET SUMMARY
AMHERST, NASHUA PMSA, STATE OF NEW HAMPSHIRE, NEW ENGLAND, USA

Year	Amherst Town Labor Force	Number Unemp.	Nashua PMSA Labor Force	Number Unemp.	Unemployment Rates				
					Amherst	Nashua PMSA	NH	NE	US
1987	4,770	140	97,650	2,590	2.9	2.7	2.6	NA	NA
1988	4,870	140	99,850	2,800	2.9	2.8	2.5	NA	NA
1989	4,610	140	98,980	3,690	3	3.7	3.4	NA	NA
1990	4,680	210	101,380	6,180	4.5	6.1	5.6	5.7	5.5
1991	4,800	250	100,730	7,360	5.1	7.3	7.2	8.0	6.7
1992	4,940	240	97,260	6,940	4.8	7.1	7.5	8.0	7.4
1993	4,980	250	97,510	6,580	5.1	6.7	6.6	6.8	6.8
1994	4,980	240	95,390	5,090	4.7	5.3	4.6	NA	6.1
1995	5,020	190	96,380	4,310	3.7	4.5	4.0	NA	5.6
1996	4,970	180	95,300	4,020	3.7	4.2	4.2	NA	5.4
Jun-97	5,320	130	101,760	2,820	2.4	2.8	3.0	4.2	5.2

Source: Local Area Unemployment Statistics Report, NH Department of Employment Security.

Educational Attainment

Amherst has the highest percentage of residents with bachelor's degrees and higher in the NRPC region, as Table II-12 illustrates. Amherst residents with either a Bachelor's or Masters degree account for 43.6 percent of the 18 and over population, in comparison to 27.4 percent regionally, and 22.1 percent statewide.

TABLE II-12
EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT OF RESIDENTS OVER 18 (1990)
AMHERST, NRPC REGION, STATE OF NH

Education Level	Amherst		Region		State of NH	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
No High School Degree	466	7.2	19,672	15.6	150,381	18.1
High School graduate	1,286	19.9	35,543	28.2	265,731	32.0
Some College (No Degree)	1,255	19.5	25,776	20.4	166,385	20.0
Associates Degree	629	9.8	10,752	8.5	64,025	7.7
Bachelor's Degree	1,796	27.9	24,638	19.5	126,495	15.2
Graduate or Professional Degree	1,015	15.7	9,944	7.9	57,112	6.9
Total	6,447	100.0	126,325	100.1	830,129	100.0

Source: 1990 US Census.

Population Projections

The Office of State Planning (OSP) population projections for the NRPC region are presented in Table II-13 and depicted for Amherst in Figure II-4. The forecasting methodology is based on a community's historical share of its respective county's growth. It makes the assumption that a town's share of growth according to changes in the 1970, 1980, and 1990 populations will remain about the same into the future. Towns like Amherst, either gained or lost shares of the county population are considered 'consistent' and the change in their share of the county population is calculated. That change is applied to the most recent population estimate as a growth factor, from which the projection is derived. By this method, the changes which have taken place in the 1970, 1980, and 1990 populations guide the estimates for the year 2000 and beyond. With each forecast away from the base year, the value of historical county growth figure begins to diminish and thus a more modest portion of that change is applied. The Office of State Planning has cooperated with the Regional Planning Commissions who provided 'hands-on' experience to review and refine the projections.

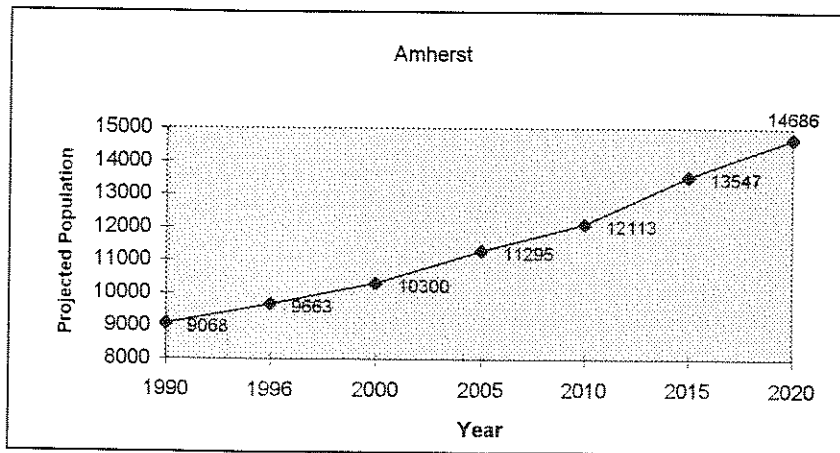
Amherst's population is expected to continue growing by approximately 1.6 percent annually over the next 20 years. If projections hold true, this growth may add as many as 5,023 persons by 2020; however, the actual rate of growth in any community is unpredictable and due to forces beyond the local control. Keeping this in mind, it can be reasonably expected that Amherst will likely grow slower than the NRPC communities of Brookline, Litchfield and Hollis, but at a similar rate with the remaining communities with the exception of Nashua.

**TABLE II-13
POPULATION PROJECTIONS
NRPC REGION**

<i>Town</i>	<i>1990 Census</i>	<i>1996 Est. Pop.</i>	<i>2000</i>	<i>2005</i>	<i>2010</i>	<i>2015</i>	<i>2020</i>	<i>% Change ('90-'20)</i>	<i>% Annual ('90-'20)</i>
Amherst	9,068	9,663	10,300	11,295	12,113	13,547	14,686	62%	1.6%
Brookline	2,410	3,128	4,140	5,135	5,953	7,243	8,279	244%	4.2%
Hollis	5,705	6,481	7,374	8,535	9,299	10,696	11,940	109%	2.5%
Hudson	19,530	21,072	23,156	24,904	26,267	29,013	31,656	62%	1.6%
Litchfield	5,516	6,540	7,612	8,856	9,674	10,749	11,785	114%	2.6%
Lyndeborough	1,294	1,414	1,557	1,756	1,920	2,178	2,427	88%	2.1%
Merrimack	22,156	23,200	24,601	26,664	28,126	30,813	32,886	48%	1.3%
Milford	11,795	12,660	13,392	14,452	15,106	16,073	17,006	44%	1.2%
Mont Vernon	1,812	1,960	2,115	2,326	2,448	2,708	2,978	64%	1.7%
Nashua	79,662	82,285	84,667	86,906	87,997	89,072	91,145	14%	.4%
Pelham	9,408	10,374	11,506	13,082	14,118	15,730	17,285	84%	2.0%
Wilton	3,122	3,243	3,433	3,704	3,889	4,104	4,363	40%	1.1%
Regional Total	171,478	182,020	195,853	209,620	216,910	231,926	248,456	44%	1.2%

Source: New Hampshire Population Projections, 1997, New Hampshire Office of State Planning.

FIGURE II-4
PROJECTED POPULATION GROWTH



Source: New Hampshire Population Projections, 1997, New Hampshire Office of State Planning.

HOUSING

Housing Supply

A history of building permit activity for residential units is illustrated in Table II-14. The trend is similar to that for population with the highest level of building activity occurring between 1970-79 and peaking again during the eighties. Having slowed during an economic recession between the late eighties and early nineties, building activity is again on the upswing. Between 1990 and 1997, a total of 487 building permits were issued, 112 of those in 1995. It is important to note that these figures represent only single family housing units.

TABLE II-14
HOUSING AND POPULATION GROWTH 1960-1996

Year	New Units for Interval	Total Town-wide	% Change Units
1960-69	729	739	NA
1970-79	1,080	1,469	98.6%
1980-89	644	2,549	42.4%
1990-97	487	3,285	22.4%

Source: Town Building Permit Records, Profile of the Nashua Region.

Housing Types

Table II-15 describes the local breakdown of housing types. As the data clearly suggests, the single family detached home with 2,851 occupied units is the most common followed by duplexes (80 occupied units) and manufactured homes (78 occupied units). A greater number of owners and renters occupy single family detached housing than duplexes or manufactured housing.

TABLE II-15
LOCAL HOUSING TYPES, 1990

Type of Housing	Occupied Units Number	Owner Occupied	Renter Occupied	Vacant Units
Single family, detached	2,851	2,524	159	168
Single family, attached	67	58	6	3
2 family (duplex)	80	11	66	3
3 or 4 family	45	41	0	4
5 to 9 family	38	8	20	10
10 to 19 family	12	12	0	0
20 or more	0	0	0	0
Mobile home or trailer	78	64	14	0
Other	8	0	5	3

Source: 1990 US Census.

Persons per Housing Unit

Table II-16 presents the change in persons per housing unit since 1970. Amherst has shown a decrease in the average number of persons per unit from 3.47 in 1970 to 3.03 in 1990. This figure is important in gauging population as it can be matched with building activity to provide population estimates. As the table illustrates, the persons per unit have been uniformly decreasing throughout the region. Amherst's figure of 3.03 remains greater than the regional and state averages of 2.76 and 2.70 respectively.

TABLE II-16
PERSONS PER HOUSING UNIT, 1970-1990
NRPC REGION

Municipality	1970	1980	1990
Amherst	3.47	3.37	3.03
Brookline	3.53	3.15	2.97
Hollis	3.46	3.18	2.94
Hudson	3.77	3.32	2.95
Litchfield	3.58	3.23	3.20
Lyndeborough	3.48	3.09	2.87
Merrimack	3.94	3.51	2.98
Milford	3.14	2.76	2.64
Mont Vernon	3.58	3.18	3.11
Nashua	3.28	2.77	2.57
Pelham	3.93	3.46	3.24
Wilton	3.13	2.98	2.71
NRPC Region	3.42	3.00	2.76
Hillsborough Cty.	3.28	2.89	2.70
State of NH	3.27	2.85	2.70

Source: US Census.

Another item of interest is the number of bedrooms per unit, as described by Table II-17. Rental units in Amherst tend to contain either one or two bedrooms in contrast to owner occupied housing where the vast majority contain 3 or more bedrooms. Of 270 rental units, 111, or 41 percent contain three or more bedrooms. Almost 10 percent of the entire housing stock contains five or more bedrooms.

TABLE II-17
NUMBER OF BEDROOMS PER HOUSING UNIT, 1990

# Bedrooms	Owner	Renter	Vacant	Total	Percent
0	0	0	0	0	0.0
1	16	44	22	82	2.6
2	363	115	78	556	17.5
3	939	37	69	1,045	32.9
4	1,141	39	22	1,202	37.8
5 +	259	35	0	294	9.2
Total	2,718	270	191	3,179	100.0

Source: 1990 US Census.

Housing Tenure

Housing tenure refers to whether or not a housing unit is owned or rented by the occupants. Table II-18 presents the tenure for Amherst and the NRPC region. Of 3,192 housing units, 2,988 or 93 percent are occupied, 91.0 percent of those by owners and 9.0 percent by

renters. In 1990, Amherst offered slightly fewer rental units than did the regional towns. Only Hollis (93.1%) and Mont Vernon (93.2%) had a higher percentage of owner occupied housing.

TABLE II-18
HOUSING TENURE IN THE NRPC REGION, 1990

Municipality	# Occupied Units	Owner-Occupied		Renter-Occupied	
		Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Amherst	2,988	2,718	91.0%	270	9.0%
Brookline	811	723	89.2%	88	10.9%
Hollis	1,942	1,810	93.2%	132	6.8%
Hudson	6,630	4,967	74.9%	1,663	25.1%
Litchfield	1,725	1,482	85.9%	243	14.1%
Lyndeborough	451	400	88.6%	51	11.3%
Merrimack	7,439	6,143	82.6%	1,296	17.4%
Milford	4,463	2,718	60.9%	1,745	39.1%
Mont Vernon	582	535	91.9%	47	8.1%
Nashua	31,051	17,920	57.7%	13,131	42.3%
Pelham	2,907	2,463	84.7%	444	15.3%
Wilton	1,152	841	73.0%	311	27.0%
Hillsborough County	124,567	79,363	63.7%	45,204	36.3%
State of NH	411,186	280,372	68.2%	130,814	31.8%

Source: 1990 US Census.

Age of Housing

As figure II-19 illustrates, Amherst witnessed a significant building boom during the years 1960-1980 which added 60.7 percent of the total housing units. Contrary to it's popular image of historic housing, 60.8 percent of the housing units are twenty or fewer years old and 83.4 percent are thirty or fewer. The construction of rental units has followed the same trend. Sixty-eight rental units were added between 1985 and 1988 representing 25.2 percent of the current total.

TABLE II-19
AGE OF HOUSING STOCK, 1990

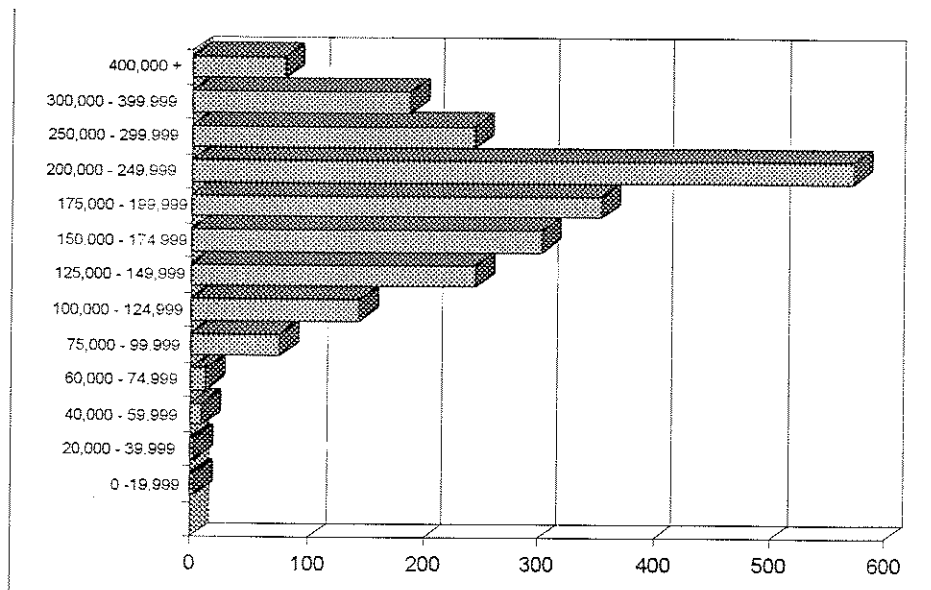
Year Built	Owner-Occupied	% Total	Renter-Occupied	% Total	Vacant	% Total	Total
pre 1939	295	10.9	79	29.3	43	22.5	417
1940 - 1949	65	2.4	0	0.0	28	14.7	93
1950 - 1959	92	3.4	9	3.3	0	0.0	101
1960 - 1969	615	22.6	44	16.3	27	14.1	686
1970 - 1979	1,036	38.1	52	19.3	40	20.9	1,128
1980 - 1984	279	10.3	18	6.7	12	6.3	309
1985 - 1988	307	11.3	68	25.2	34	17.8	409
1989 - Mar 1990	29	1.1	0	0.0	7	3.7	36
Total	2,718	100.0	270	100.0	191	100.0	3,179

Source: 1990 US Census.

Housing Values

Two thirds of Amherst's housing stock is valued at greater than \$150,000; most commonly between \$200,000 and \$249,999. Figure II-5 displays the range and number of units within each category. The median value of owner occupied housing is shown in Table II-19 in comparison to the NRPC region. Amherst had the second highest median house value (\$197,000) which illustrates a 140 percent change over the 1980 assessment of \$82,300.

FIGURE II-5
ASSESSED VALUE OF LOCAL PROPERTIES, 1990



Source: 1990 US Census.

TABLE II-20
MEDIAN VALUE, OWNER OCCUPIED HOUSING, 1980-90
NRPC REGION

Municipality	1980	1990	% Change 1980-90
Amherst	\$82,300	\$197,700	140.20%
Brookline	\$59,100	\$170,900	189.20%
Hollis	\$74,200	\$229,800	209.70%
Hudson	\$59,500	\$145,000	143.70%
Litchfield	\$62,400	\$147,500	136.40%
Lyndeborough	\$47,900	\$134,300	180.40%
Merrimack	\$59,400	\$139,700	135.20%
Milford	\$54,800	\$137,600	151.10%
Mont Vernon	\$60,200	\$176,400	193.00%
Nashua	\$55,800	\$138,800	148.70%
Pelham	\$59,100	\$160,500	171.60%
Wilton	\$49,200	\$134,400	173.20%
Hillsborough County	\$54,300	\$137,500	153.20%
State of NH	\$48,000	\$139,400	169.60%

Source: US Census.

FAIR SHARE ANALYSIS

A fair share analysis is a planning tool used to measure the growth of a given town in comparison to others in it's region. A 'fair share' is growth proportional and consistent to regional change. The basis of this technique stems from NH statute. NH RSA 674:22 "Growth Management; Timing of Development", empowers communities (after preparation and adoption of a community master plan and capital improvement program) to "... regulate and control the timing of development ... (which) shall be based upon a growth management process intended to assess and balance community needs and consider regional development." As presented, this table highlights Amherst's proportion of regional growth.

Figure II-21 illustrates the analysis conducted over six years, from 1990-96 using single family residential building permits issued as the basis of comparison. The first tier is described as those towns immediately abutting Amherst. The second tier are those towns surrounding the first tier. The table illustrates the growth rates in residential housing units within the two tiers and describes the proportional distribution of growth for each given year.

The rate of growth for Amherst from 1990 to 1996, 11.51 percent, is higher than the total change in the first and second tiers, 8.02 percent and 3.56 percent respectively. This change is within the midrange for the two tier region where housing growth varied from 2.09 percent in Nashua to 36.44 percent in Brookline. The housing growth in Amherst at 11.51 percent, is over twice the total change for the two tiers which increased by 5.30 percent. The number of building permits issued has been increasing steadily from 18 in 1991 to 113 in 1996. Additionally, Amherst issued more building permits than any other town, excepting Manchester, Nashua, and Goffstown in 1995 and 1996.

AMHERST MASTER PLAN
CHAPTER II: Population and Housing

TABLE II-21
FAIR SHARE ANALYSIS, 1991-96*
AMHERST, NRPC REGION

	Existing Units 1990	Permits 1991	Total Units	Annual Change	Permits 1992	Total Units	Annual Change	Permits 1993	Total Units	Annual Change	Permits 1994	Total Units	Annual Change	Permits 1995	Total Units	Annual Change	Permits 1996	Total Units	Annual Change	Change 1990-96
FIRST TIER																				
Amherst	3,179	18	3,197	0.57%	38	3,235	1.19%	41	3,276	1.27%	66	3,342	2.01%	90	3,432	2.69%	113	3,545	3.20%	11.51%
Hollis	2,006	39	2,045	1.94%	57	2,102	2.79%	58	2,160	2.76%	71	2,231	3.29%	61	2,292	2.73%	42	2,334	1.83%	16.35%
Merrimack	7,915	39	7,954	0.49%	120	8,074	1.51%	123	8,197	1.52%	88	8,285	1.07%	66	8,351	0.80%	98	8,449	1.17%	6.75%
Milford	4,793	44	4,837	0.92%	49	4,886	1.01%	37	4,923	0.76%	52	4,975	1.06%	41	5,016	0.82%	31	5,047	0.62%	5.30%
Mont Vernon	614	6	620	0.98%	11	631	1.77%	7	638	1.11%	15	653	2.35%	0	653	0.00%	12	665	1.84%	8.31%
New Boston	913	27	940	2.96%	14	954	1.49%	20	974	2.10%	25	999	2.57%	28	1,027	2.80%	22	1,049	2.14%	14.90%
First Tier Total	16,241	155	16,396	0.93%	251	16,647	1.53%	245	16,892	1.47%	251	17,143	1.49%	196	17,339	1.14%	205	17,544	1.18%	8.02%
SECOND TIER																				
Brookline	881	54	935	6.13%	63	998	6.74%	58	1,056	5.81%	46	1,102	4.36%	43	1,145	3.90%	57	1,202	4.98%	36.44%
Goffstown	5,022	61	5,083	1.21%	65	5,148	1.26%	71	5,219	1.36%	76	5,295	1.44%	90	5,385	1.67%	40	5,425	0.74%	8.02%
Litchfield	1,845	116	1,961	6.29%	58	2,019	2.96%	44	2,063	2.18%	51	2,114	2.47%	46	2,160	2.18%	35	2,195	1.62%	18.97%
Lyndeborough	488	12	500	2.46%	7	507	1.40%	10	517	1.97%	9	526	1.74%	16	542	3.04%	0	542	0.00%	11.07%
Manchester	44,361	132	44,493	0.30%	153	44,646	0.34%	134	44,780	0.30%	235	45,015	0.52%	243	45,258	0.54%	226	45,484	0.50%	2.55%
Nashua	33,383	112	33,495	0.34%	83	33,578	0.25%	104	33,682	0.31%	166	33,848	0.49%	156	34,004	0.46%	77	34,081	0.23%	2.09%
Weare	2,417	42	2,459	1.74%	26	2,485	1.06%	44	2,529	1.77%	56	2,585	2.21%	29	2,614	1.12%	24	2,638	0.92%	9.14%
Wilton	1,251	3	1,254	0.24%	6	1,260	0.48%	6	1,266	0.48%	10	1,276	0.79%	3	1,279	0.24%	11	1,290	0.86%	3.12%
Second Tier Total	89,648	532	90,180	0.59%	461	90,641	0.51%	471	91,112	0.52%	649	91,761	0.71%	626	92,387	0.68%	470	92,857	0.51%	3.58%
TOTAL	109,068	705	109,773	0.65%	750	111,260	1.35%	757	112,017	0.68%	966	112,983	0.86%	912	113,895	0.81%	956	114,851	0.84%	5.30%

*This table assumes that all permitted units were actually built.

Source: US Census Building Permit Records.

CONCLUSION

Through the coming decades, Amherst will likely see continued, steady growth on the order of 1-2 percent per year. While the actual rate is truly speculative, the NRPC region's diverse, highly skilled economy has proven to generate demand for the quality of life which Amherst represents. That translates into growth. Preserving that quality may be the Town's most important task. An earlier Landuse Analysis and Plan (1962) reported that "Amherst's historic charm is distinctive, even in New England. Growth should be so directed as to assure a retention of Amherst's colonial atmosphere and residential attractiveness". The same is true today. Residential growth needs to be understood and adequately planned for in order to prevent unguided development.

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